

What is rheumatoid arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA for short) is a sickness involving your immune system (body's natural defense against sickness) that leads to inflammation (painful swelling) in various organs. RA usually affects the joints and causes pain, swelling, and stiffness (hard to move). If RA is not treated well or on time, the inflammation can lead to joint damage and deformities (something that is not a normal shape).

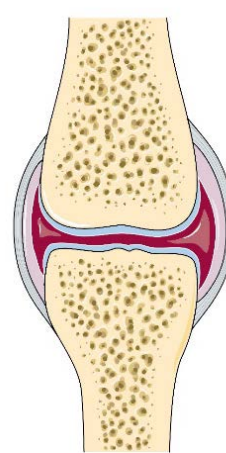


Sometimes the inflammation from RA can also affect other parts of the body, including the skin, eyes, heart, lungs, and blood vessels.

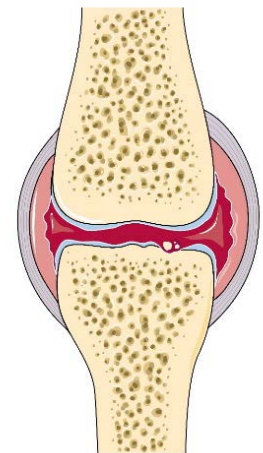


What are the most common signs of RA?

- Aches and pains
- RA usually affects your fingers, wrists, ankles, and toes.
- RA can also affect your elbows and knees.
- RA usually affects both sides of the body.
- Joint stiffness (hard to move) - especially in the mornings, that can last several hours
- Swelling of your finger, wrist, ankle, toe, elbow, and knee joints
- Feeling tired or loss of energy
- Lumps on your skin (these are called rheumatoid nodules)



Normal joint



Rheumatoid arthritis



Who is at risk for RA?

- No one is sure what causes RA or other autoimmune diseases.
- RA starts between 40 and 60 years of age.
- Women are much more likely than men to get RA.
- People who smoke are more likely to get RA.
- People with close family members with RA are more likely to get RA.

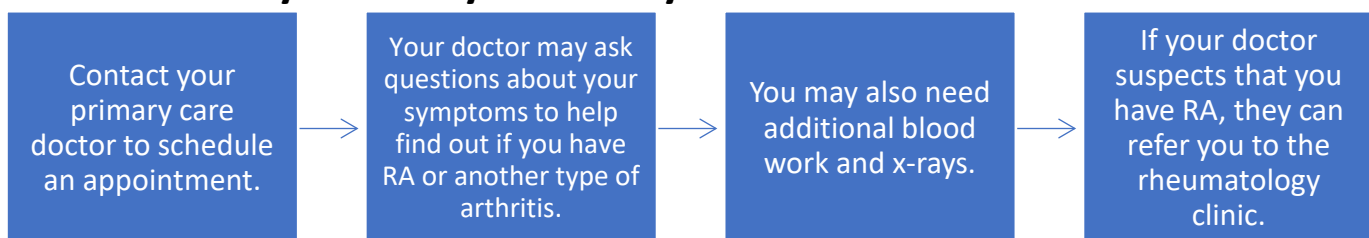


RA is not contagious. You can't "catch" RA or "give" RA to someone.

More about RA:

- RA is a chronic disease (lasts for your lifetime).
- Symptoms often change over time, being more active at certain times and quiet at other times.
- Early diagnosis and treatment can help you control your symptoms and prevent long-term damage of your joints and possibly other organs.
- If not adequately treated it can make it hard to work, cause emotional and social problems, increase risk for other conditions such as heart and bone disease, and reduce life expectancy.

What should you do if you think you have RA?



Contact information for the URM C Rheumatology clinic:



- Phone number: 585-486-0901
- Fax number: 585-340-5399

